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## Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Take on Bluefield State Thursday

Georgia Southern University

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# Georgia Southern University



## Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Take on Bluefield State Thursday

GS is 2-0 for the first time since 2002-03.

Marc Gignac

Men's Basketball

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**Georgia Southern (2-0) vs. Bluefield State (2-0)**

**Thursday, Nov. 16 - Hanner Fieldhouse (3,897) – 7 p.m.**

**Radio:** GS Sports Network (pregame show starts 6:30 p.m. on WMBQ (Savannah), 1370 AM WLOP (Jesup) **Promotions:** National Fast Food Day - The first 100 students get a free Chick-Fil-A sandwich

**Series:** First meeting

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[Georgia Southern](#)

[Roster](#)

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[Schedule](#)

[Bluefield State](#)

[Roster](#)

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### Probable GS Starters:

- #0 [Montae Glenn](#)
- #2 [Mike Hughes](#)
- #3 [Ike Smith](#)
- #4 [Tookie Brown](#)
- #10 [Jake Allsmiller](#)

### Setting the Scene

- Georgia Southern opens play in the Gulf Coast Showcase Thursday when the Eagles play host to Bluefield State at 7 p.m. in Hanner Fieldhouse.
- The tournament continues with three contests next week in Germain Arena in Estero, Fla. The Eagles meet Missouri State Monday at 1:30 p.m. and play either Manhattan or UMKC Tuesday.
- Georgia Southern posted double-digit wins in Hanner Fieldhouse for the third straight season, finishing with a 10-3 record in 2016-17. Georgia Southern is 34-9 in

Hanner Fieldhouse in its last 43 contests there and 41-15 under Byington.

- It will be the first meeting between Georgia Southern and Bluefield State on the hardwood.
- The Eagles have been one of the youngest teams in the country the last two years, and for the second year in a row, Georgia Southern returns 94 percent of its scoring and all five starters, including first-team All-Sun Belt selections [Ike Smith](#) and [Tookie Brown](#).
- GS was picked fourth and Brown, Smith and [Mike Hughes](#) were named all-conference in the Sun Belt Preseason Poll, which is voted on by the league's 12 head coaches.
- The Eagles are ranked 19th in the CollegeInsider Mid-Major top-25. Gonzaga is ranked first, UTA is ranked ninth, Louisiana is 14th, Missouri State is 15th and Georgia State is 20th.
- The Eagles are coming off a 77-53 victory over CSU Bakersfield in their home opener Monday night.
- GS improved to 2-0 to start the season for the first time since the 2002-03 campaign. The Eagles have not started a season 3-0 since 1992-93.
- Bluefield State opened its season with a 76-67 home victory over Lincoln (Pa.) last Friday and defeated Concord 87-83 on the road Wednesday.

### Three Things to Know about the Eagles

- 1 - [Ike Smith](#)'s jumper 1:40 into the contest at Wake Forest was the first basket of the season for the Eagles and gave the junior 1,000 points for his career. He is the third active Eagle with 1,000 career points as [Mike Hughes](#) and [Tookie Brown](#) reached the milestone last season.
- 2 - Georgia Southern returns the Sun Belt's top two scorers in juniors [Ike Smith](#) (19.6 ppg) and [Tookie Brown](#) (17.1 ppg). The 2017 first-team All-Sun Belt selections are the fourth-highest scoring returning duo in the country. They were the third-highest freshman scoring duo in the country in 2015-16 (1-Rice's Marcus Evans and Marquez Letcher-Ellis, 2- FSU's Dwayne Bacon and Malik Beasley).
- 3 - Georgia Southern's top-3 seasons in 3-pointers made and attempted have all come during [Mark Byington](#)'s tenure. GS ranked first in the SBC in threes per game (9.2) and 31st in the country this season, and the Eagles made 10 or more threes in a game 15 times. GS's .362 percentage from long distance was the eighth-highest in school history. GS made 11 triples in the opener at Wake Forest.

### Team Storylines

- [Mark Byington](#) is coaching in his 142nd career game today and his 132nd at Georgia Southern. His 51 wins in his first three seasons at Georgia Southern are the best of any coach in the modern era. He posted a 7-4 record at College of Charleston in 2012, filling in as the interim coach for Bobby Cremins.
- Under [Mark Byington](#), Georgia Southern is 49-11 in games when leading at half and 59-5 when leading with five minutes to go.
- The Eagles' 85-83 victory at Wake Forest was their first over an ACC opponent since topping Virginia Tech 83-78 on the road in 2012. Byington was an assistant coach for the Hokies at the time.
- Georgia Southern's NCAA RPI of 122 in 2017 was the second-highest in the last 27 seasons (111 in 2015).
- Georgia Southern made its seventh postseason appearance in the Division I era and first since 2006, as the Eagles played in the College Basketball Invitational last year.
- GS joins UTA and Louisiana as the only three teams to reach double digit wins in conference play in each of the last three seasons and has the third most league victories (36) during that time.
- Since joining the Sun Belt in 2014, 29 Georgia Southern games against Sun Belt schools have been decided by five points or less, and the Eagles are 19-10.
- The Eagles are 26-5 in Sun Belt games when leading at halftime. GS is 27-1 when leading with five minutes to go.
- GS has a combined record of 34-17 in Sun Belt games played in January and February since joining the league in 2014-15.
- GS averaged 75.5 points a game, the second-most in the last 11 years. The Eagles scored over 80 12 times, including six straight games from 12/20-1/14, and scored over 90 five times, including two in a row Jan. 21 and 23. It was the first time the Eagles scored 90-plus points in back-to-back Division I games since Feb. 11 and Feb. 13, 2006.
- GS shot 50 percent or better in a half in 21 games, including 60 percent or better three times. The Eagles shot 50 percent or better in both halves of a game twice (GSU, 12/31 and CCU, 1/23) and shot 50 percent or better in six games.
- Georgia Southern ranked second in the Sun Belt in fewest turnovers, turnovers per game and turnover margin. The Eagles logged single-digit turnovers in 10 games and posted a season-low six vs. Troy (1/7).
- GS ranked third in the Sun Belt in made free throws and in free-throw attempts. The Eagles attempted 30-plus free throws in six games and made 20-plus free throws in seven contests.

### Talking 1K

- [Ike Smith](#) became the third active Eagle to reach 1,000 points with a jumper 1:40 into the game in the season opener at Wake Forest Nov. 10. It was the first basket of the 2017-18 season.
- [Mike Hughes](#) reached the mark in the final game against Utah Valley last season. It was the last basket of the 2016-17 campaign.
- [Tookie Brown](#) scored his 1,000th career point at Appalachian State Feb. 13, 2017. He is the first Eagle in the program's modern era to reach the mark as a sophomore. Two Eagles did it in their second seasons at Georgia Southern (Elton Nesbitt and Johnny Mills).
- Three Eagles reached the mark in the same season once. Nesbitt, Terry Williams and Jean Francois scored their 1,000th point in 2004-05.
- The 2004-05 trio and Jelani Hewitt, Eric Ferguson and Trent Wiedeman in 2014-15 are the only times Georgia Southern had three 1,000-point scorers on the same team (Wiedeman scored 886 points at College of Charleston before transferring to GS).

### Next Up

- Georgia Southern plays three contests in the Gulf Coast Showcase next week. The Eagles begin the stretch with a 1:30 p.m. contest Monday against Missouri State in Germain Arena and plays either UMKC or Manhattan Tuesday.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides current information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, which is fully responsive across all mobile devices. Information on Eagle athletics can also be found through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics and Instagram.com/GSAthletics. To purchase tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.

In order to expedite entry and provide a safe environment for all patrons and participants, Georgia Southern Athletics has implemented a Clear Bag Policy for all ticketed sporting events, effective Aug. 1, 2017. Fans can find the complete policy as well as an FAQ section at GSEagles.com/ClearBag.